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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, G/TIP

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SUBJECT: EGYPT: SIGNS OF STRONGER EFFORTS ON TIP

REF: CAIRO 2536

Sensitive but unclassified, please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A new inter-ministerial committee on Trafficking In Persons (TIP), a proposed new child protection law with anti-TIP provisions, and a nascent public awareness campaign are signs that the GOE is moving towards awareness of, and eventually action on, TIP. Continued challenges will be developing more comprehensive anti-TIP legislation; a common perception of TIP as a cross-border, rather than internal Egyptian, problem; and arrests and prosecutions. We are also seeking opportunities to assist the GOE on public awareness and training for law enforcers and prosecutors.
End summary.

First Meeting for TIP Committee

¶2. (SBU) The "National Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons", created by Prime Ministerial decree on July 15 (reftel), will meet for the first time on October 17 and be chaired by the MFA Assistant Minister for Multilateral Relations Naela Gabr. Praising the creation of the committee, the DCM on October 10 emphasized to Wael Aboul Magd, MFA Deputy Assistant Minister for Human Rights and the MFA's lead on TIP, the importance of moving quickly to increase arrests and prosecutions of traffickers, with the understanding that the GOE currently lacks a comprehensive anti-TIP law. The DCM encouraged quick action to develop new legislation, and to gather statistics on TIP cases in Egypt to better understand and address the problem. Aboul Magd described the new committee as a significant step towards increasing GOE activism on TIP, opining that the Prime Minister's involvement and the a-political nature of the topic will allow the GOE interagency machine to work as quickly as possible on this problem.

¶3. (SBU) Aboul Magd said that the committee will focus on three simultaneous tracks: implementation of already existent anti-TIP provisions; legislating new anti-TIP laws; and increasing public awareness of the nature and importance of TIP. Aboul Magd highlighted that public awareness and education of TIP is one of the committee's biggest challenges. He noted that, while the GOE and USG are in agreement on the importance of making progress in combating TIP, the GOE nevertheless would not be driven by Washington's timetable for producing the yearly TIP report.

New Child Protection Law

¶4. (SBU) The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) is putting the finishing touches on a new child protection law, developed with input from a broad range of Egyptian and international experts, that strengthens and

broadens Egypt's anti-TIP legislation in regards to children.

At NCCM request, emboffs and Justice Attaché have been consulting on the law and pressing for anti-TIP provisions. The law notes specifically that "the child shall be protected against trafficking, sexual harassment, exploitation, sexual, emotional, and physical abuse." For example, it specifically delineates a penalty of at least five years in prison and a fine of at least LE 50,000 (USD 8,993) for any who "present for purchasing, receive, or deliver a child in order to be treated as a slave or with the intention of usage in unlawful commercial or sexual exploitation or any other illegitimate purposes." A new section on child labor forbids children working under age 15, or being trained under age 13, and lays out humane working conditions. Those in violation are subject to fines beginning at LE 200 (USD 36), doubling for each violation, and any who "endanger the life of a child," which includes exposing a child to "abuse, violence, exploitation, or displacement," incurs a sentence of at least three months in prison. The new law increases the minimum age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18, and the age of consent is already defined to be 18.

¶5. (SBU) NCCM head Ambassador Moushira Khattab told the DCM on October 8 that the NCCM would present this new law to parliament when it reconvenes in November, and that she expects the law to be passed this year. She expects little resistance to most of the law's provisions. However, she noted that implementation, particularly on child labor, will be an issue, as in fact current Egyptian law already contains provisions against child labor. The problem, she said, is that many feel that restricting children's ability to work limits the income available to Egypt's poor families, who need as much extra income as possible from every capable family member. Khattab noted as well that, while there is

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almost universal agreement in Egypt that TIP is a problem across borders, the public, police, prosecuting, and legislative community is not yet sensitized to the fact that TIP is an internal Egyptian problem as well.

Comment

¶6. (SBU) The inter-ministerial committee, draft legislation, and nascent public awareness efforts are signs that the GOE is moving towards awareness of, and eventually action on, TIP. We note that the Egyptian focus on TIP continues to be on a cross-borders problem, and it will take time to educate the Egyptian public, law enforcers, prosecutors, and law-makers on the importance of addressing TIP within Egypt.

JONES